

SCOPUS



A publication of the
Bird Committee of the
East Africa Natural History Society

Edited by
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Volume 36(1), January 2016

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Additions to the Ethiopian bird atlas: 126 new records from 14 atlas squares

Ole Tobias Rannestad

Summary

The bird atlas for Ethiopia provides an unsurpassed overview of the country's avian diversity and species distribution. However, many atlas squares have not been regularly visited by ornithologists, and there are numerous knowledge gaps. I provide 126 major and minor range extensions for 118 species across 14 atlas squares. A total of 15 species were also recorded outside their known altitudinal range in Ethiopia. All records are from 2007–2014. Records from big game hunting areas Demmero and Odo Bulu (square 99a) and Sala (107a) constitute the bulk of the report. There are also new species from sites frequently visited by travellers, such as Awasa (83c), Gonder (29a) and Axum (16d). Prominent gap-fillers include Wattled Crane *Bugeranus carunculatus*, Bronze-winged Courser *Rhinoptilus chalcopterus*, Red-pate Cisticola *Cisticola ruficeps*, Shelley's Starling *Lamprotornis shelleyi* and Desert Wheatear *Oenanthe deserti*.

Introduction

In 2009, John Ash and John Atkins published the most comprehensive bird account for Ethiopia to date (Ash & Atkins 2009). The atlas is based on more than 100,000 records, and describes in detail the known range for a total of 837 species across 418 Ethiopian atlas squares (tetra 1 remote and more or less inaccessible regions, results in numerous species distribution gaps in the atlas. This applies for many, if not most, bird species.

This report is a supplementary account to the Ethiopian bird atlas. It comprises gap-filling records for bird species seen outside the range presented in Ash & Atkins (2009). All records are from the period 2007–2014, and cover a total of 14 widely spread atlas squares (Figure 1). For easy comparison, atlas square numbers, as well as bird nomenclature and sequence, follows Ash & Atkins (2009) throughout. English nomenclature according to Redman *et al.* (2011) is given in brackets where this work diverges.

Observations outside the altitudinal limits indicated in Ash & Atkins (2009), Redman *et al.* (2011) and a recent publication by Dowsett & Dowsett-Lemaire (2015) are discussed and marked with an asterisk (*). For details on ecology and behaviour, see species accounts provided in Brown *et al.* (*The Birds of Africa*, volumes 1–7, 1980–2004).

Species endemic to either Ethiopia or to the Abyssinian highlands (i.e. Ethiopia and Eritrea) are labelled accordingly. Species regarded as Critically Endangered (CR), Endangered (EN), Vulnerable (VU) or Near Threatened (NT) by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) are labelled according to their current Red List status (IUCN 2015). Details for sites mentioned in this report are found in Appendix 1.

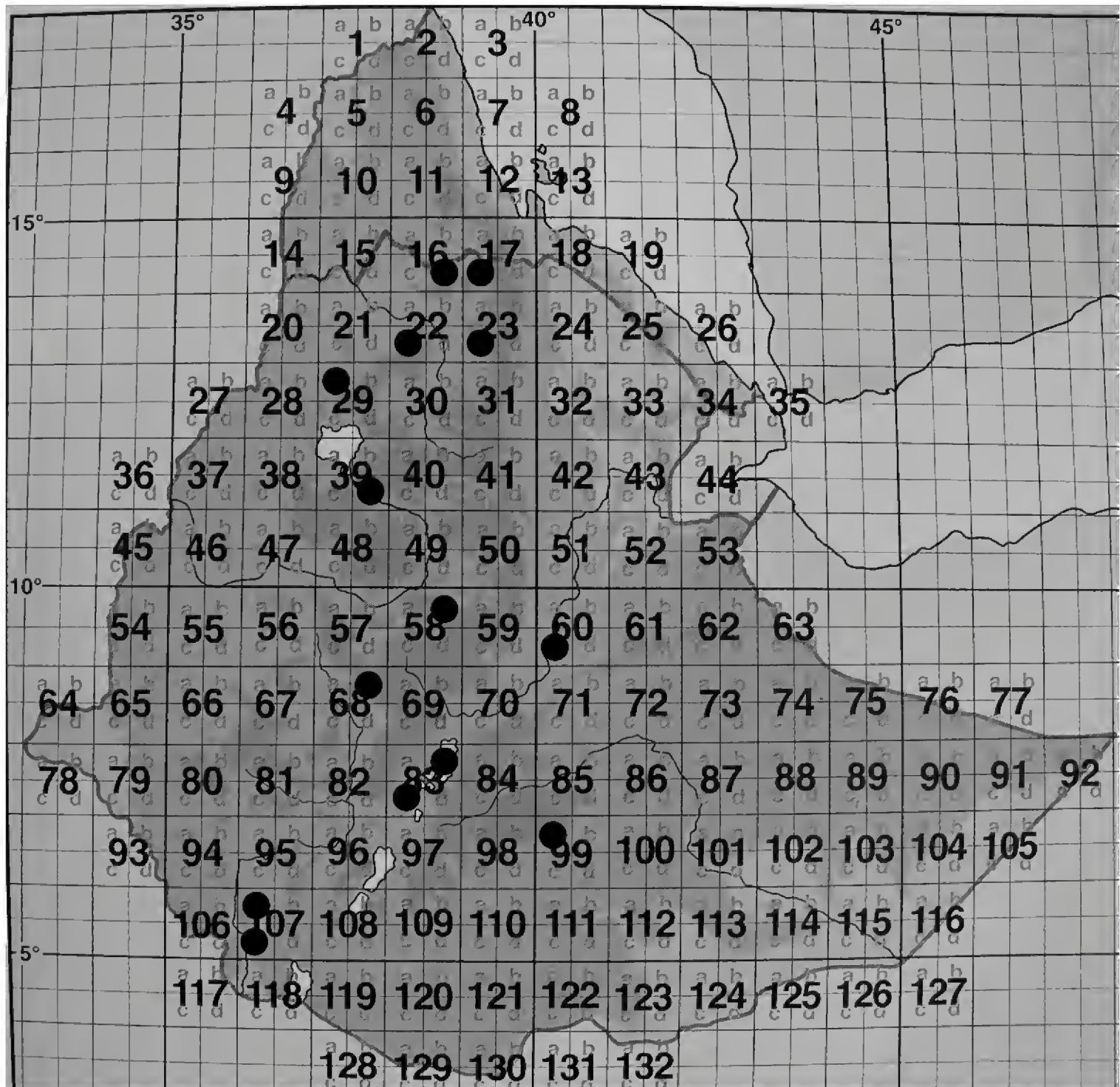


Figure 1. Map from Ash & Atkins (2009) showing the atlas squares (tetrads) for Ethiopia and Eritrea. A total of 418 squares are on Ethiopian territory. Squares with at least one new observation referred to in this report are marked with a black dot.

Results and Discussion

Major range extensions and most notable records

Woolly-necked Stork *Ciconia episcopus*

One bird was seen in Demmero (99a), 24 October 2014, in damp, short grassland intensively grazed by cattle. My observation represents a moderate south-eastern extension of this species' range in Central Ethiopia.

Barbary Falcon *Falco pelegrinoides*

One bird was seen in Bilen (60c), 26 February 2014. The bird showed reddish hindcrown and neck, thus distinguishing it from Peregrine Falcon *F. peregrinus*. Fine barring of underparts further distinguished it from Lanner Falcon *F. biarmicus*.

White-headed vulture *Trionoceph occipitalis* (CR)

One individual of this increasingly rare species was seen perched close to Sala River (107a), 12 March 2014.

Eastern Chanting Goshawk *Melierax poliopterus*

One bird seen on the western shore of Lake Langano (83b), 19 February 2014. Yellow cere and white rump were obvious. Even though the species has been frequently recorded in the north-eastern and south-western parts of the Rift Valley, this is the first record from the central part. My observation represents a moderate range extension in Ethiopia.

Mountain Buzzard *Buteo oreophilus* (NT)

Single birds seen in Demmero, 28 and 30 October 2014, and in Odo Bulu, 1 March 2014 (both 99a), hovering over forest. All birds were generally light coloured, with dominantly white, spotted underwing coverts and a dark carpal “comma”. The bellies were boldly spotted. Ash & Atkins (2009) has only 13 reliable records of this species, and misidentification with other *Buteo* spp. is probably common. Mountain Buzzard is recorded in three adjacent atlas squares, one with an unconfirmed breeding record, suggesting that the Bale Mountains is a hot spot in Ethiopia.

Wattled Crane *Bugeranus carunculatus* (VU)

The same bird was seen on five consecutive days, 24–28 October 2014, in damp grassland in Demmero (99a). It was feeding close to livestock, and appeared undisturbed by herders. This species has one of its Ethiopian strongholds in the Bale Mountains, and has previously been recorded in two adjacent atlas squares, including one breeding record.

African Wattled Plover (Lapwing) *Vanellus senegallus*

Surprisingly, being recorded in 81 atlas squares (Ash & Atkins 2009), none of these are from the Omo River Valley. I saw four Wattled Plovers in grassland on stony ground about 100 m from Sala River (107a), 16 March 2014. My observation represents a moderate range extension in Ethiopia.

Bronze-winged Courser *Rhinoptilus chalcopterus*

I saw three birds close to Sala River (107a), 14 March 2014. The birds were standing in the shade at midday, which is typical behaviour for the species. This observation represents a large range extension in Ethiopia, where this species has been recorded only four times (Ash & Atkins 2009). The species has, however, been recorded around Lake Turkana in northern Kenya.

? Green Wood-hoopoe *Phoeniculus purpureus*

Two *Phoeniculus* wood-hoopoes were observed in riverine forest along Sala River (107a), 16 March 2014. The taxonomic status of this genus is unclear (Turner 2014), and care should be taken when identifying birds in the field. I had good views of both birds, and they displayed a bright red beak, as well as iridescent green head, upper breast and upper back. My initial conclusion was *P. purpureus*. That would have meant a large range extension for the species in Ethiopia, the nearest confirmed records being in the Gambela region in the far west. However, unresolved and confusing taxonomy leads me to believe that my record should be left undecided for now. Ash & Atkins (2009) included an observation of Violet Wood-hoopoe *P. d.*

damarensis in their List D (species not considered acceptable for the Ethiopian Atlas). Redman *et al.* (2011), however, speculated that *P. damarensis* was present in the lower Omo Valley, and this has recently been confirmed from Murle and Lake Dipa (both 107c) (Dowsett & Dowsett-Lemaire 2015). These taxa have a more blue or violet shine compared to *P. purpureus*, but Ash & Atkins (2009) refers to one bird from square 106b with a green tinge on the upper mantle.

Eurasian Wryneck *Jynx torquilla*

Several birds were flushed from thickets along Sala River (107a) between 19 and 21 March 2014. There is only one other record (94d) from this southwestern corner of the country.

Red-pate Cisticola *Cisticola ruficeps

This species is apparently rare in Ethiopia, and has only been reliably recorded six times in five squares; two in the very north (subspecies *scotoptera*) and three in the south-west (subspecies *mongalla*) (Ash & Atkins 2009). I saw two small groups of 5–7 birds close to Sala River (107a), 19 and 20 March 2014. Both groups were seen in dry bush growing on the steep, stony riverbank approximately 200m west of the Sala River at 600–650m. This is below the known lower altitudinal limit of 750m. Being a small, fairly nondescript cisticola with a rufous crown, it could also have been confused with Tiny Cisticola *C. nana*, which has been recorded in adjacent squares 107c and 106b. Conveniently, one bird was singing, the song matching with the description given for *C. ruficeps* in Redman *et al.* (2011). I was unable to determine subspecies, but the previous record of *C. r. mongalla* from adjacent atlas square 95d gives an indication.

Shelley's Starling *Lamprotornis shelleyi*

One bird was seen in dry bush on the western shore of Lake Langano (83b), 19 October 2008. Superb Starling *L. superbis* is very common in the area. A close view from less than ten metres revealed the lack of a white breast band and a glossy blue head, confirming it to be *L. shelleyi*. The habitat in the area is suitable for Shelley's Starling, which is common in dry *Acacia* woodland in Ogaden, Borana and Southern Omo. It is also recorded in the Afar area in the north-eastern part of the Rift Valley. This Langano record represents a moderate range extension in Ethiopia, but the bird should be considered a vagrant.

? Somali Starling *Onychognathus blythii*

Two dark-headed, long-tailed *Onychognathus* starlings were seen perched on the cliffs above the Jemmu River Canyon close to Debre Libanos (58b), 2 January 2011. My initial reaction was Somali Starling, but later scrutiny of an unclear photograph could not entirely rule out Slender-billed Starling *O. tenuirostris*. Considering Ash & Atkins (2009), this observation would have represented a large range extension for Somali Starling, but Behrens *et al.* (2010) also reported it to be present at this site.

Sharpe's Starling *Pholia sharpii*

A flock of five birds was seen in forest canopy in Odo Bulu (99a), 1 March 2014. My observation is the easternmost for this species in Ethiopia.

Rufous Scrub Robin *Cercotrichas galactotes*

One bird was seen on the western shore of Lake Langano (83b), 19 October 2008. The

species is frequently seen in the north-eastern part of the country, but my observation represents the southernmost record in the Rift Valley.

Desert Wheatear *Oenanthe deserti

One bird was seen above the Jemmu River Canyon close to Debre Libanos (58b), 2 January 2011. This species is common in north-eastern Ethiopia, Eritrea and Djibouti, but rarely ventures this far south. The bird was seen at 2500m, far higher than the upper altitudinal limits of 1000m in Ash & Atkins (2009) and 1200m in Redman *et al.* (2011). This suggests it was a vagrant.

White-winged Cliff Chat *Thamnolaea semirufa* (endemic to Abyssinian highlands)

Two single birds were seen at 2100m elevation on rocky outcrops on the southern side of the Bale Escarpment in Demmero (99a), 27 and 29 October 2014. These are the southernmost records for this species east of the Bale Mountains.

Olive Sunbird *Cyanomitra olivacea

One bird seen in *Hagenia abyssinica* forest in Odo Bulu (99a), 1 March 2014. The upper altitudinal limit for this species is reported at 2450m, while I saw it at 2700m. This is also the easternmost record in Ethiopia.

Minor range extensions

Chestnut-naped Francolin *Francolinus (Pternistis) castaneicollis*

Single birds and small groups daily in Demmero (99a), 21 October–3 November 2014.

Egyptian Goose *Alopochen aegyptiaca*

Common in and around aquatic habitats in Wonchi (68b), 30 December 2010. Common in Demmero (99a), 21 October–3 November 2014.

Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula*

Five birds on Lake Wonchi (68b), 30 December 2010.

Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

Several groups in reedbeds on Lake Wonchi (68b), 30 December 2010.

Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus*

Two birds on Lake Wonchi (68b), 30 December 2010.

Lesser Flamingo *Phoeniconaias minor* (NT)

A group of seven birds next to a swampy waterhole in Bilen (60c), 27 February 2014.

Black Stork *Ciconia nigra*

One individual seen foraging in damp grassland in Demmero (99a), 1 November 2014.

Sacred Ibis *Threskiornis aethiopicus*

Seen daily in Demmero (99a), 21 October–3 November 2014.

Hadada Ibis *Bostrychia hagedash*

Seen daily in Demmero (99a), 21 October–3 November 2014.

Wattled Ibis *Bostrychia carunculata* (endemic to Abyssinian highlands)

Very common in grasslands and along streams in Demmero (21 October–3 November 2014) and Odo Bulu (27 February–5 March 2014) (both 99a). More than a hundred birds seen daily en route to roosting sites in Demmero.

Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*

Frequent in Gonder Town (29a), 6–7 October 2013. Seen daily in Demmero (99a), 21 October–3 November 2014.

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*

Single birds seen three times in riverine forest along the Sala River (107a), 10–21 March 2014.

Hamerkop *Scopus umbretta*

Seen daily along the Sala River (107a), 10–21 March 2014. Seen daily in Murle (107c), 7–10 March 2014.

Long-tailed Cormorant *Phalacrocorax africanus*

Several birds on Lake Wonchi (68b), 30 December 2010.

Eurasian Hobby *Falco subbuteo*

Two single birds in Demmero (99a), 24 and 27 October 2014.

Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus*

One bird seen over Gonder Town (29a), 7 October 2013.

African Swallow-tailed Kite *Chelictinia riocourii*

Two individuals of this intra-tropical migrant seen in Murle (107c), 7 March 2014, perched on tall termite mounds and hovering over grassland.

Black (Yellow-billed) Kite *Milvus (migrans) aegyptius*

Ash & Atkins (2009) does not split Black Kite *M. migrans* into Black Kite *M. migrans* and Yellow-billed Kite *M. aegyptius*. The latter (sub-) species was seen daily in Sala (107a), 10–21 March 2014.

Short-toed (Snake) Eagle *Circaetus gallicus*

One bird hovering over the so-called Queen of Sheba's bath in Axum Town (16d), 1 January 2013.

Brown Snake Eagle *Circaetus cinereus*

A single bird over grassland in Demmero (99a), 24 October 2014.

Pallid Harrier *Circus macrourus* (NT)

One bird in Murle (107c), 6 March 2014, hovering over grassland.

African Harrier-hawk *Polyboroides typus*

One bird roosting at forest edge in Demmero (99a), 29 October 2014.

African Goshawk *Accipiter tachiro*

Seen and heard daily in aerial display over forest in Demmero (99a), 21 October–3 November 2014.

Shikra *Accipiter badius*

One bird at forest edge in Demmero (99a), 25 October 2014. Two single birds in riverine forest along the Sala River (107a), 20 and 21 March 2014.

Rufous-breasted Sparrowhawk *Accipiter rufiventris*

One bird in forest in Demmero (99a), 25 October 2014, unsuccessfully hunting Common Bulbul *Pycnonotus barbatus*.

Augur Buzzard *Buteo augur*

Seen daily in Demmero (99a), 21 October–3 November 2014, perched at forest edge, or hovering over grassland and forest.

Verreaux's Eagle *Aquila verreauxii*

The same pair was seen daily, gliding over rocky outcrops at the Bale Escarpment in Demmero (99a), 21 October–3 November 2014.

Wahlberg's Eagle *Aquila wahlbergi*

One bird flying at forest edge in Odo Bulu (99a), 4 March 2014.

Booted Eagle *Aquila pennatus*

One bird gliding over grassland in Demmero (99a), 24 October 2014.

Long-crested Eagle *Lophaetus occipitalis*

Two individuals, both perched, in Demmero (99a), 29 October and 1 November 2014.

Red-knobbed Coot *Fulica cristata*

Three birds in reedbeds on Lake Wonchi (68b), 30 December 2010.

African Snipe *Gallinago nigripennis*

One bird seen at the "Amora Gedel" by Awasa Lake (83c), 25 December 2010, feeding with a flock of Ruff *Philomachus pugnax*.

Speckled Pigeon *Columba guinea

Several birds perched on a small building at the southern edge of the Geech Plateau in Semien Moutains National Park (22c), 4 October 2013. The upper altitudinal limit has been reported at c. 3000 m for this species, while I saw it at 3400 m.

White-collared Pigeon *Columba albitorques* (endemic to Abyssinian highlands)

Several large flocks were seen flying from roosting sites in cliffs to feeding sites in nearby barley fields in Demmero (99a), 21 October–3 November 2014.

African Olive Pigeon *Columba arquatrix*

Two birds in montane forest in the Wonchi Crater (68b), 30 December 2010. Seen or heard almost daily in montane forest in Demmero (21 October–3 November 2014) and Odo Bulu (27 February–5 March 2014) (both 99a).

Lemon Dove *Columba (Aplopelia) larvata*

Two birds on the ground in a garden in Ghion Town (68b), 29 December 2010. Two single birds in thickets in Demmero (99a), 24 and 27 October 2014.

Red-eyed Dove *Streptopelia semitorquata

Common in agricultural areas and at forest edge in Demmero (21 October–3 November 2014) and Odo Bulu (27 February–5 March 2014) (both 99a). In Odo Bulu it was seen at 2700 m, extending the known upper altitudinal limit from 2500 m.

Tambourine Dove *Turtur tympanistria

Single birds in forest in Demmero (99a), 26 and 29 October 2014. They were seen at 2250 m, marginally extending the known upper altitudinal limit from 2150 m.

Bruce's Green Pigeon *Treron waalia*

Relatively common in riverine forest and fruiting trees in Sala (107a), 10–21 March 2014.

Brown (Meyer's) Parrot *Poicephalus meyeri*

Seen or heard daily in open woodland and riverine forest in Sala (107a), 10–21 March 2014.

White-cheeked Turaco *Tauraco leucotis (often considered endemic to Abyssinian highlands, but also recorded in the Boma Hills in South Sudan)

Seen or heard daily in forest and at forest edge in Demmero (21 October–3 November 2014) and Odo Bulu (27 February–5 March 2014) (both 99a). Also seen or heard daily in riverine forest in Sala (107a), 10–21 March 2014. The presence as low as 600 m in Sala has not been reported before, and Ash & Atkins (2009) and Redman *et al.* (2011) have 900 m as the lower altitudinal limit. The subspecies at all three sites was *T. l. leucotis*.

Common Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus*

One individual, probably a first year bird, was seen in Gonder Town (29a), 6 October 2013. The bird had a little yellow at the base of the bill and a lot of brown in the plumage. White fringes to coverts and remiges, and a greyish tail with white bars, could indicate African Cuckoo *C. gularis*, but detailed scrutiny of a picture by John Atkins, an anonymous referee and I, led to the identification as *C. canorus*. A possible *C. gularis* would have been far outside its known seasonal and altitudinal range in Ethiopia. Unspecified *C. canorus/gularis* has previously been recorded from square 29a, but my record represents the first definite *C. canorus*.

African Wood Owl *Strix woodfordii

One pair heard calling in *Hagenia abyssinica* forest in Odo Bulu (99a), 4 March 2014. This record at 2700 m extends the known upper altitudinal limit of 2600 m.

Abyssinian Nightjar (Montane Nightjar) *Caprimulgus poliocephalus*

One bird heard calling in Demmero (99a), 1 November 2014.

Freckled Nightjar *Caprimulgus tristigma*

One bird heard calling in Sala (107a), 19 March 2014.

African Palm Swift *Cypsiurus parvus*

Seen daily in small groups above *Hyphaene* palms and riverine forest in Sala (107a), 10–21 March 2014.

Nyanza Swift *Apus niansae*

Several birds seen in the southern outskirts of Mekele Town (23c), 27 December 2012.

Narina Trogon *Apaloderma narina*

Single birds seen in dense forest in Demmero, 25 October 2014 and in Odo Bulu, 1 March 2014 (both 99a).

Broad-billed Roller *Eurystomus glaucurus*

Single birds seen eight times in woodland and riverine forest in Sala (107a), 10–21 March 2014.

Blue-breasted Bee-eater *Merops variegatus (lafresnayii)*

Small groups seen on grassy slopes at 2250 m altitude along the Bale Escarpment in Demmero (99a), 21 October–3 November 2014.

Black Scimitarbill *Rhinopomastus aterrimus*

Small groups seen in open woodland and along the Sala River (107a), 10–21 March 2014.

Silvery-cheeked Hornbill *Bycanistes brevis

Common in montane forest and at forest edge in Demmero (21 October–3 November 2014) and Odo Bulu (27 February–5 March 2014) (both 99a). The upper altitudinal limit was known to be 2430 m, but my records from Odo Bulu were at 2700 m.

Red-fronted Tinkerbird *Pogoniulus pusillus*

One bird seen in an old *Olea europaea* at 2100 m altitude next to the historical temple in Yeha (17c), 3 January 2013.

Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird *Pogoniulus chrysoconus*

Frequently heard, but rarely seen at 2250 m altitude in Demmero (99a), 21 October–3 November 2014.

Black-billed Barbet *Lybius guifsobalito*

Recorded almost daily in riverine forest and woodland in Sala (107a), 10–21 March 2014.

Lesser Honeyguide *Indicator minor*

Three single birds seen in riverine forest in Sala (107a), 19 and 20 March 2014.

Scaly-throated Honeyguide *Indicator variegatus*

One bird seen in riverine forest in Sala (107a), 19 March 2014.

Grey Woodpecker (Grey-headed Woodpecker) *Dendropicos (goertae) spodocephalus*

Ash & Atkins (2009) treats African Grey Woodpecker *D. goertae* and Grey-headed Woodpecker *D. spodocephalus* as conspecific. The latter was seen twice at 2250 m altitude at forest edge in Demmero (99a), 24 and 29 October 2014.

Northern Puffback *Dryoscopus gambensis

Uncommon in forest and at forest edge in Demmero (21 October–3 November 2014) and Odo Bulu (27 February–5 March 2014) (both 99a). The upper altitudinal limit has been reported as 1900 m (once at 2576 m). Dowsett & Dowsett-Lemaire (2015) recently adjusted this to 2600 m, but my records from Odo Bulu are as high as 2700 m. I have also recorded this bird in Bihere Tsige (8°57'14"N, 38°45'12"E; 2200 m) on the southern outskirts of Addis Ababa in May 2007 and December 2010.

White-breasted Cuckooshrike *Coracina pectoralis*

Two males seen in *Terminalia/Combretum* woodland close to Sala River (107a), 11 and 17 March 2014.

Red-shouldered Cuckooshrike *Campephaga phoenicea

One male seen in riverine forest along the Sala River (107a), 17 March 2014. At 600 m altitude, this bird was below the known lower altitudinal limit of 750 m.

Abyssinian Oriole *Oriolus monacha* (endemic to Abyssinian highlands)

Common in forest and at forest edge in Demmero (21 October–3 November 2014) and Odo Bulu (27 February–5 March 2014) (both 99a).

Black-headed Oriole *Oriolus larvatus

Seen several times in Odo Bulu (99a), 27 February–5 March 2014). While expecting to see only Abyssinian Oriole *O. monacha* at this site, I was surprised to find birds in woodland and at forest edge at 2700m displaying white wing-panels. Both Ash & Atkins (2009) and Redman *et al.* (2011) have 1800m as the upper altitudinal limit for this species. Sinclair & Ryan (2010), however, report it to range up to 2300m elsewhere in East Africa. This leap in altitude in Odo Bulu could possibly be explained by the short distance to lower lying areas south of the Bale Escarpment.

African Paradise-flycatcher *Terpsiphone viridis*

Common in forest and at forest edge in Demmero (21 October–3 November 2014) and Odo Bulu (27 February–5 March 2014) (both 99a). The white morph was particularly common in Odo Bulu.

Cape Crow *Corvus capensis*

Fairly common on agricultural land in Demmero (99a), 21 October–3 November 2014.

Northern Black Tit (White-shouldered Black Tit) *Parus (leucomelas) guineensis*

Ash & Atkins (2009) does not split *P. guineensis* and *P. leucomelas* (White-winged Black Tit). I saw *P. guineensis* twice in open woodland in Sala (107a), 14 and 18 March 2014.

Wire-tailed Swallow *Hirundo smithii*

Seen daily in small numbers in Sala (107a), 10–21 March 2014.

Rock Martin *Ptyonoprogne fuligula*

Seen daily in Demmero (99a), 21 October–3 November 2014.

Northern (Common) House Martin *Delichon urbicum*

Seen daily in Demmero (99a), 21 October–3 November 2014.

Lesser Striped Swallow *Cecropis (Hirundo) abyssinica*

Small groups seen daily at 600 m in Sala (107a), 10–21 March 2014.

Boran Cisticola *Cisticola bodessa*

One bird seen and heard close to the “Amora Gedel” by Awasa Lake (83c), 7 May 2007.

Tawny-flanked Prinia *Prinia subflava*

Several birds seen in tall grassland and forest edge in Demmero (99a), 21 October–3 November 2014.

Common Bulbul *Pycnonotus barbatus*

Common in Demmero (21 October–3 November 2014) and Odo Bulu (27 February–5 March 2014) (both 99a). The subspecies seen at both sites was *spurius*, displaying clear yellow vent, no white ear patch, and no scaling on breast.

Brown Woodland Warbler *Phylloscopus umbrovirens*

Single birds seen on two occasions in forest in Demmero (99a), 1 and 2 November 2014.

Common Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita*

Frequently seen and heard in forest and at forest edge in Odo Bulu (99a), 27 February–5 March 2014.

Green-backed Eremomela *Eremomela canescens*

Four birds seen close to Tis Isat Falls (39d), 7 October 2013.

Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla*

Frequently seen in forest and forest edge in Odo Bulu (99a), 27 February–5 March 2014.

African Hill Babbler *Pseudoalcippe abyssinica*

Seen in forest in both Demmero (28 and 30 October 2014) and Odo Bulu (1 and 3 March 2014) (both 99a).

Brown Babbler *Turdoides plebejus*

Small, noisy groups seen or heard daily in riverine forest and dense bush at 600 m altitude in Sala (107a), 10–21 March 2014. This is below the lower altitudinal limit of 700 m given in Ash & Atkins (2009) and Redman *et al.* (2011), but Dowsett & Dowsett-Lemaire (2015) recently recorded the species at 400 m.

***Red-winged Starling** *Onychognathus morio*

Flocks of up to 50 birds frequently seen around cliffs and in fruiting trees in Demmero (21 October–3 November 2014) and Odo Bulu (27 February–5 March 2014) (both 99a). The known upper altitudinal limit for this species was c.2400 m, but my observations from Odo Bulu were at 2700 m.

Groundscraper Thrush *Psophocichla litsipsirupa*

Fairly common in grassland and around cultivation in Odo Bulu (99a), 27 February–5 March 2014.

African Thrush *Turdus pelios*

Single birds seen on several occasions in Sala (107a), 10–21 March 2014.

Olive Thrush (Mountain Thrush) *Turdus (olivaceus) olivaceus*

It is now thought that birds in Eastern Africa are Mountain Thrush *T. abyssinicus* (Redman *et al.* 2011, Sinclair & Ryan 2010), while *T. olivaceus* is restricted to Southern Africa. Ash & Atkins (2009) treats them as conspecific. Very common in forest, at forest edge and around cultivation in Demmero (21 October–3 November 2014) and Odo Bulu (27 February–5 March 2014) (both 99a).

Rüppell's Robin-chat *Cossypha semirufa*

Common in thickets and forest understorey in Demmero (99a), 21 October–3 November 2014.

Abyssinian Slaty Flycatcher *Melaenornis chocolatinus* (endemic to Abyssinian highlands)

Several birds seen in Axum Town (16d), 31 December 2012. Common in woodland and at forest edge in Demmero (October/November 2014) and Odo Bulu (February/March 2014) (both 99a).

Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata*

Several single birds seen at forest edge in Demmero (99a), 21 October–3 November 2014.

African Dusky Flycatcher *Muscicapa adusta*

Seen daily at forest edge in Demmero (21 October–3 November 2014) and Odo Bulu (27 February–5 March 2014) (both 99a).

Scarlet-chested Sunbird *Chalcomitra senegalensis*

Pairs and single birds seen daily in Sala (107a), 10–21 March 2014.

Tacazze Sunbird *Nectarinia tacazze*

Common at forest edge and in wooded grassland in Demmero (21 October–3 November 2014) and Odo Bulu (27 February–5 March 2014) (both 99a).

Variable Sunbird *Cinnyris venustus*

Common at forest edge in Demmero (99a), 21 October–3 November 2014.

Baglafecht Weaver *Ploceus baglafecht*

Very common at forest edge in Demmero (99a), 21 October–3 November 2014.

Vitelline Masked Weaver *Ploceus vitellinus*

Surprisingly, Ash & Atkins (2009) does not have records of this species from Awasa (83c), even though it is evidently common, and the site is regularly visited by birders. My records are from 5 May 2007 and 27 December 2010.

Yellow-mantled Widowbird *Euplectes macrourus*

Three birds in breeding plumage seen in agricultural fields just south of Mekele Town (23c), 26 September 2013.

Yellow-bellied Waxbill *Estrilda (Coccopygia) quartinia*

Seen daily in damp grassland and in thickets in Demmero (99a), 21 October–3 November 2014.

Bronze Mannikin *Lonchura (Spermestes) cucullata

Small groups frequently seen in damp grassland in Sala (107a), 10–21 March 2014. My records at 600 m are below the known lower altitudinal limit of 750 m.

Pin-tailed Whydah *Vidua macroura*

A few breeding birds seen in damp grassland in Demmero (99a), 21 October–3 November 2014.

Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*

Single birds and pairs seen several times in Demmero (21 October–3 November 2014) and Odo Bulu (27 February–5 March 2014) (both 99a).

African Pied Wagtail *Motacilla aguimp*

Several single birds seen in grassland and along the Sala River (107a), 10–21 March 2014.

Yellow-crowned Canary *Serinus (flavivertex) canicollis*

Two single birds seen in Demmero (25 October 2014) and Odo Bulu (1 March 2014) (both 99a). Both birds were singing from canopy at forest edge, which is untypical behaviour for the species.

African Citril *Serinus citrinelloides

Common at forest edge in Demmero (21 October–3 November 2014) and Odo Bulu (27 February–5 March 2014) (both 99a). My Odo Bulu records were at 2700 m, higher than the known altitudinal limit of 2500 m.

Brown-rumped Seedeater *Serinus tristriatus*

Common at forest edge and along roads in Demmero (21 October–3 November 2014) and Odo Bulu (27 February–5 March 2014) (both 99a).

Streaky Seedeater *Serinus striolatus*

Common in grassland and at forest edge in Demmero (99a), 21 October–3 November 2014).

Acknowledgements

I thank Jason and Nassos Roussos of Ethiopian Rift Valley Safaris for assisting me in exploring their hunting concessions in Murle, Sala, Demmero and Odo Bulu, and for allowing me to stay in their camps. In a country where national parks are deteriorating at an alarming rate, it is encouraging to see how well-managed hunting areas are playing an important role in nature conservation. I am also grateful to John Atkins and Nigel Redman for constructive comments during the development of this report.

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Scopus 36(1): 1–14, January 2016

Received 31 May 2015

Appendix 1: Site details

See Figure 1 for map with square numbers.

Square	Site name	Coordinates	Altitude (m)
16d	Axum Town	14°08'02''N, 38°43'20''E	2150
17c	Yeha	14°17'09''N, 39°01'08''E	2100
22c	Geech Plateau	13°13'41''N, 38°05'31''E	3400
23c	Mekele Town	13°28'14''N, 39°28'18''E	2200
29a	Gonder Town	12°37'11''N, 37°28'06''E	2300
39d	Tis Isat Falls	11°29'22''N, 37°35'21''E	1650
58b	Debre Libanos	9°44'03''N, 38°48'50''E	2500
60c	Bilen-Hertele	9°27'43''N, 40°18'34''E	750
68b	Wonchi Crater Lake	8°47'42''N, 37°54'00''E	2900
68b	Ghion Town	8°32'01''N, 37°58'54''E	2000
83b	Langano Lake	7°35'51''N, 38°41'36''E	1600
83c	Awasa Lake	7°02'23''N, 38°27'41''E	1700
99a	Odo Bulu	6°55'44''N, 40°09'58''E	2700
99a	Demmero	6°54'21''N, 40°18'24''E	2250
107a	Sala	5°58'52''N, 36°15'48''E	600
107c	Murle	5°09'47''N, 36°11'34''E	400

Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* interactions with large mammals in the Tarangire-Manyara Ecosystem, Northern Tanzania

John Kioko, Emily Boyd, Erin Schaeffer, Sidra Tareen and Christian Kiffner

Summary

While Cattle Egrets *Bubulcus ibis* are globally widespread, their ecology is not fully understood. Surveys of the species were undertaken in November 2012, and April 2013, in Lake Manyara National Park, Manyara Ranch, and outside the two protected areas. We investigated the effects of host identity, habitat type and host animal behaviour on Cattle Egret numbers and distribution. Cattle Egrets associated more with grazers than with mixed-feeders or browsers, and chose large-bodied animals over small-bodied ones. They preferred wetland and grassland, over bushland. These findings underscore the importance of wetland management and the maintenance of healthy grasslands for the future of Cattle Egrets. Declines in large-bodied mammal species are likely to negatively affect them.

Introduction

Cattle Egrets *Bubulcus ibis* are small, widely distributed herons that usually nest in large colonies, prefer habitats near water, and typically feed in grasslands (Telfair 1994, Seedikkoya *et al.* 2005, BirdLife International 2014). They prey on insects and other invertebrates, especially those that fly after being disturbed by associated large mammals (Seedikkoya *et al.* 2005, Kour & Sahi 2012). They also eat ticks, flies and other ectoparasites found on mammals (Siegfried 1971). In Africa, they forage with cattle and a range of other large mammals by following the animal closely, usually near its head (Heatwole 1965, Kour & Sahi 2012). In order to catch their prey, they must keep up with their host, and they often switch animals when the host speed is no longer within their optimal range (Burger & Gochfeld 1982). Bigger herds of large mammals tend to be associated with more Cattle Egrets, presumably because they flush more prey and provide more feeding opportunities (Wahungu *et al.* 2003). Such large groups of egrets can reduce the vigilance needed by the associated mammals, increasing foraging efficiency for both species (Seedikkoya *et al.* 2005).

Understanding the associations between Cattle Egrets and large mammals is important considering the declines of wild mammals (Msoffe *et al.* 2011; Ogutu *et al.* 2014) and ongoing rangeland degradation in East Africa (Kioko *et al.* 2012). We investigated the effect of habitat characteristics, host choice, feeding guild, body size and host behaviour on Cattle Egret distribution within Lake Manyara National Park, Manyara Ranch and adjacent community land.

Methods

The study was conducted in northern Tanzania, within the Tarangire-Manyara

Ecosystem (TME). The study sites were: Lake Manyara National Park (LMNP) (3°30'S, 35°50'E), Manyara Ranch (MR) (3°58'S, 36°00'E) and adjacent areas under human use (e.g., cultivation, homesteads and livestock grazing). Annual rainfall is approximately 650 mm per year (Morrison & Bolger 2012), with a short rainy season (Nov–Dec) and a longer rainy season (Mar–May). The habitat is typical savanna, dominated by *Acacia-Commiphora* bushland and open grasslands. Lake Manyara (200 km²) was a dominant feature within the study area. Much of the area has limited perennial freshwater sources, but there are a few perennial rivers and dams that help to sustain wildlife and livestock. Domestic livestock included cattle, goats, sheep, and donkeys. Common wild mammals included Thomson's gazelle *Gazella thomsonii*, Kirk's dik dik *Madoqua kirkii*, wildebeest *Conochaetes taurinus albojubatus*, Burchell's zebra *Equus burchelli*, impala *Aepyceros melampus*, Cape buffalo *Syncerus caffer*, and hippopotamus *Hippopotamus amphibious*. The wildlife is mostly found within the protected areas, except for a few species that disperse into adjacent human-settled areas. LMNP is bordered by farmlands that largely rely on furrow irrigation. The irrigated farms are associated with aggregations of waterbirds, including Cattle Egrets.

We walked or drove 2 km transects that were 500 m apart during the dry season (April 2012) and during the short rainy season (November 2013). We noted the location of Cattle Egrets, and the number and associated species of large mammal. Large mammals were defined as any mammal species bigger than a Kirk's dik dik. Sheep and goats were grouped together as 'shoats' as they were often mixed. We also recorded the activity of Cattle Egrets and large mammals. Egret activity was classified as stationary, flying, foraging, or vigilant, while large mammal activity was classified as resting, walking or vigilant. Fifty-three transects were undertaken in LMNP, 97 in MR, and 63 in the human-use areas. Cattle Egrets within 50 m of a large mammal (Heatwole 1965) and seemingly responding to the animal were considered to be associating.

Data analysis was done in SPSS Statistics 17.0 (SPSS 2009). Jacob's Index (Jacobs 1974) was used to determine Cattle Egret host preference. Jacob's Index scores were calculated based on mammal feeding guilds: grazers, browsers, and mixed-feeders; and a higher score indicated a more highly preferred host (Blondel 2003). Habitat preference was determined using Ivlev's Selectivity Index (Ivlev 1961). The index has a possible range of -1 to +1, with negative values indicating avoidance and positive values indicating preference. Higher scores indicate a highly preferred habitat. The relationship between mammal group size and the number of Cattle Egrets was determined using Spearman's rank correlation. A linear regression was used to determine the effect of host body size (average log body mass) on Cattle Egret host choice (based on Jacob's Index score). Chi-square cross tabulation was used to evaluate the extent of association between Cattle Egrets and large mammal species. A Kruskal-Wallis Test was used to determine whether flock sizes of egrets varied across different habitats.

Results

Influence of habitat type and surface water on distribution of egrets

The three study sites consisted of woodland (18%), closed bushland (10%), open bushland (31%), scrubland (17%), wetland (4%) and grassland (20%). Cattle Egret group size did not vary across habitat types (Kruskal-Wallis, $\chi^2=1.254$, $df=3$, $p=0.740$). However, Ivlev's Index values showed that wetlands (0.84) and grasslands

(0.42) were preferred, while open bushland (-0.70) and closed bushland (-0.70) were avoided. Cattle Egret presence was not dependent on the presence of water, but was positively related to the distance from the nearest water point ($r_s = 0.534$, $p < 0.001$).

Egret host selection based on feeding behaviour and activity pattern

Cattle Egrets completely avoided all browsers—bushbuck, dik dik, giraffe and lesser kudu. Among mixed-feeders, they associated with elephants, impala and shoats. Of the pure grazers studied, buffalo, cattle, donkey, wildebeest, zebra, hippopotamus and warthog, only warthogs were not selected (Fig 1).

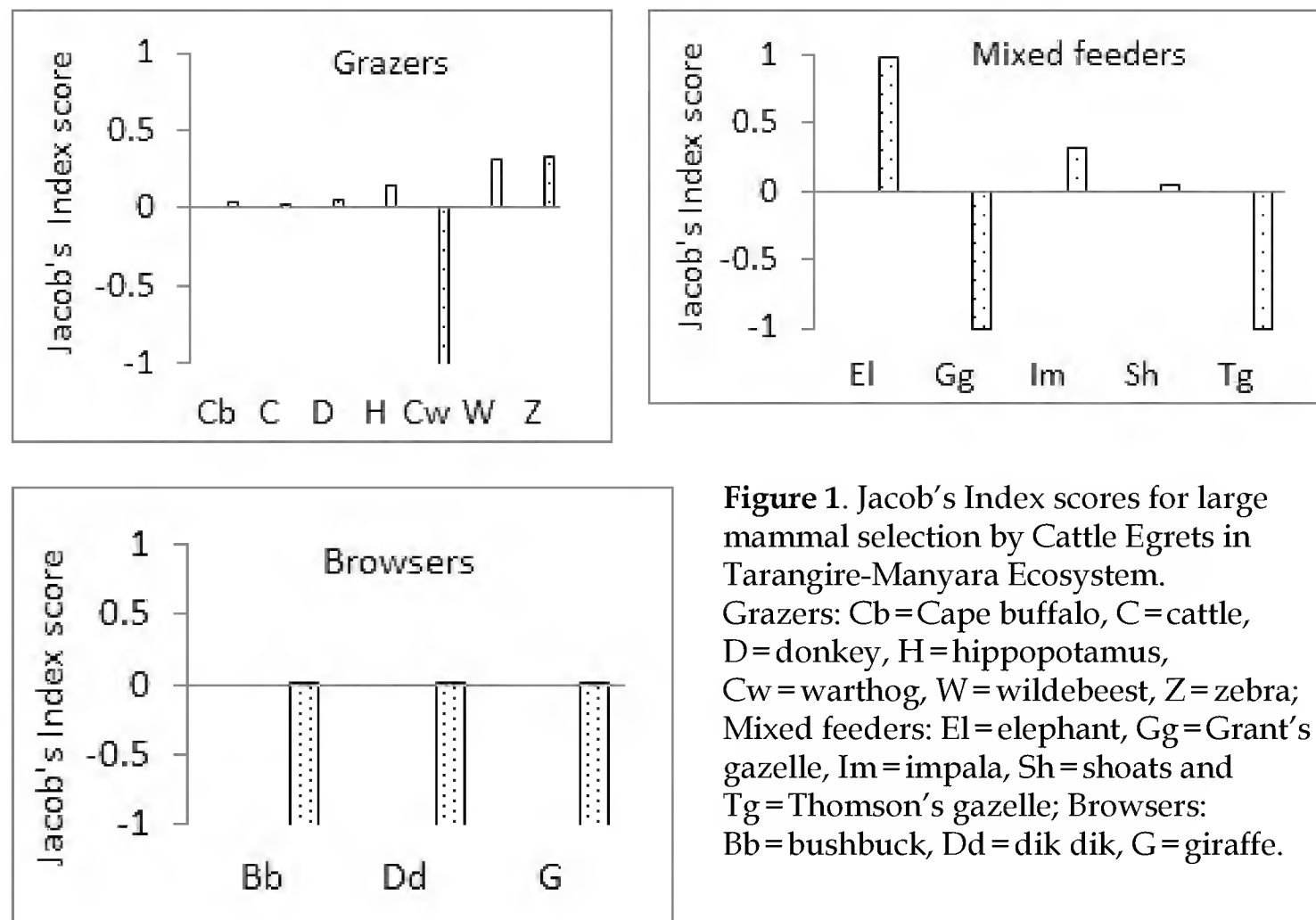


Figure 1. Jacob's Index scores for large mammal selection by Cattle Egrets in Tarangire-Manyara Ecosystem. Grazers: Cb=Cape buffalo, C=cattle, D=donkey, H=hippopotamus, Cw=warthog, W=wildebeest, Z=zebra; Mixed feeders: El=elephant, Gg=Grant's gazelle, Im=impala, Sh=shoats and Tg=Thomson's gazelle; Browsers: Bb=bushbuck, Dd=dik dik, G=giraffe.

There was a significant relationship between the behaviour of large mammals and that of Cattle Egrets ($\chi^2 = 15.936$, $df = 2$, $p < 0.001$). Egrets primarily associated with cattle when they were grazing (85 %). They foraged most often (75 %) when large wild mammals were also foraging. When large wild mammals were resting, Cattle Egrets were rarely seen foraging (7 %).

Relationship between large mammal body size, group size and association with egrets

There was a significant and positive correlation between associated large mammal body size (kg) and preference by Cattle Egrets ($r_s = 0.578$, $p = 0.008$, $n = 20$). (Fig. 2). This suggests that larger bodied mammals are more likely to be selected.

When data for all large mammals (including cattle), were grouped, there was a significant positive correlation between mammal group size and the number of Cattle Egrets ($r_s = 0.431$, $p < 0.001$, $n = 117$). There was also a significant positive correlation between cattle group size and Cattle Egret group size ($r_s = 0.381$, $p < 0.05$, $n = 57$). However, there was no significant correlation between Cattle Egret group size and the group sizes of Cape buffalo, zebra, shoats, donkeys and hippopotamus.

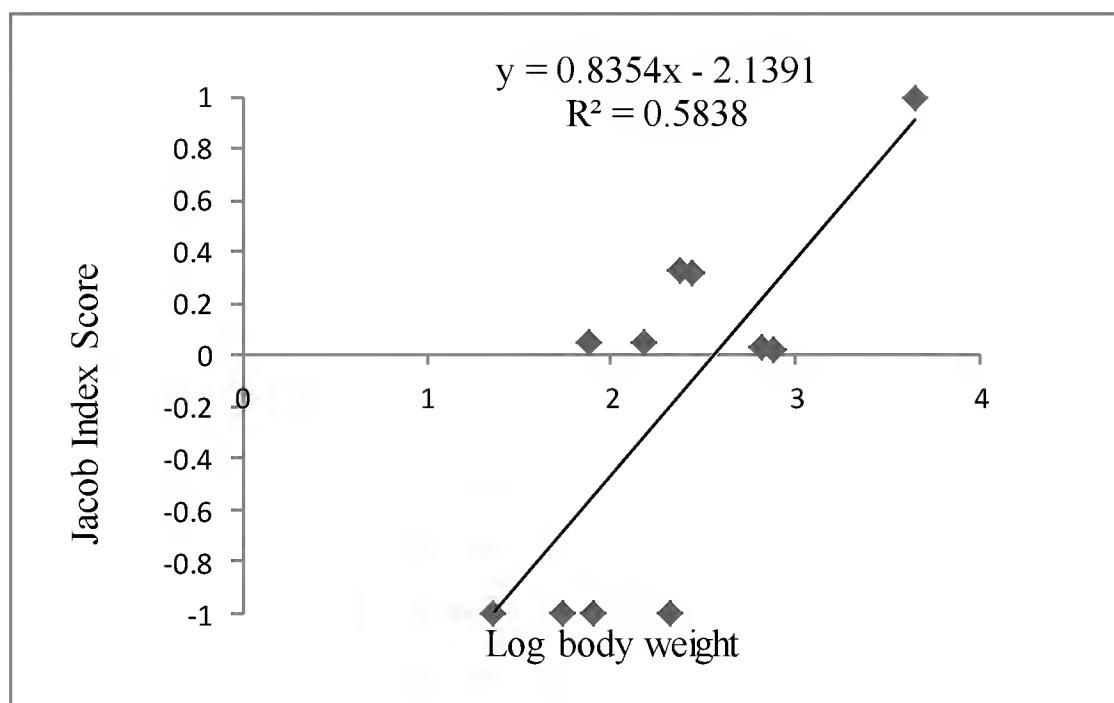


Figure 2. Relationship between host preference by Cattle Egrets and large mammal body size.

Discussion

Cattle Egrets preferred grassland and wetland habitats. Wahungu *et al.* (2003) observed that Cattle Egrets feed efficiently in grasslands, less in shrubland, and the least in woodland habitats. In closed habitats such as woodlands and shrublands, ground layer vegetation is often poorly developed and large mammal grazers are sparse (Dean & MacDonald 1981), thus feeding association is expected to be lower. Cattle Egrets usually use vegetation near wetlands as roosting sites (Zimmerman *et al.* 1996). While Cattle Egrets have adapted to foraging on land and have lost the ability, possessed by their wetland relatives, to accurately correct for light refraction by water (Katzir *et al.* 1999), they rely heavily on wetland as feeding grounds, where they associate with other waterbirds (Kour & Sahi 2012). The lack of a positive relationship between Cattle Egrets and the presence of water suggests that other factors such as associated mammal species may be of greater importance to egret distribution. The positive correlation between Cattle Egrets and the distance from water points suggests that they are likely to move further away from water points in search of potential hosts. Cattle, one of their key hosts (Dinsmore 1973, Grubb 1976) forage widely in savannas.

Cattle Egrets associated with large mammals, both wild and domestic, but preferred grazers over browsers and mixed-feeders. They intentionally approach large mammals where they get an opportunity to feed on insects that are flushed by the grazing animals (Dean & MacDonald 1981), thus spending less energy searching for prey (Seedikkoya *et al.* 2005). The higher association between Cattle Egrets and cattle suggests a selective advantage. When in the company of cattle, their efficiency is 3.60 to 5.20 times more than when they not associated with cattle (Dinsmore 1973, Grubb 1976). Their association with wild large mammal grazers such as Cape buffalo, wildebeest, and zebra is likely to be due to the large aggregations among these species that improves the potential for more insects being flushed. Large mammal grazers

are more likely to be found within grassland habitats that are also the preferred habitat for Cattle Egrets. Their close association with hippopotamus is likely due to habitat overlap, with both having a high affinity for wetlands (Collopy & Jelks 1989). When hippopotamus bask outside water or graze during the day, Cattle Egrets perched on them to serve as vantage foraging points. The tendency for Cattle Egrets to avoid mixed-feeders and browsers is probably because most of these species utilize relatively closed habitats (Burkepile *et al.* 2013) and occur in smaller groups.

Cattle Egrets preferred large-bodied grazers over small-bodied ones. It is likely that large-bodied grazers disturb more prey and also provide vantage points for the birds. An increase in egret group size was concurrent with augmented large mammal group size. However, when examined by species, only cattle group size was significantly correlated with Cattle Egret group size. Burger & Gochfeld (1982) suggest that typical cattle walking speed (10–30 m per step per minute) optimizes Cattle Egret foraging. This suggests that Cattle Egrets select hosts that offer them the best foraging success.

Considering that Cattle Egrets are closely associated with large mammals, a decline in the latter may negatively impact egret populations. Current trends show declines of most large mammals, including livestock, in southern Kenya (Ogutu *et al.* 2014), the Maasai Mara region (Ogutu *et al.* 2011), and in northern Tanzania (Rogers *et al.* 2003). Measures that protect rangelands for both wildlife and livestock can safeguard the future of Cattle Egrets.

Acknowledgements

This study was financially and logistically supported by the School for Field Studies Center for Wildlife Studies–Tanzania. The research was done under TAWIRI Research permit No 2012-241-NA-2012-57.

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Review of Kenya bird records 2011-2014

Collated by David Pearson and Colin Jackson

From 1978 to 1998 notable records of birds in the three East African countries, checked and vetted by the Ornithological Sub-Committee (OS-C) of the EANHS, were published in a series of *Scopus* Reports. No equivalent system of record review has operated since, but reporting has continued to the present through various channels. For Kenya, a summary of records was given in each issue of *Kenya Birds* from 1992, and this was continued up to Vol. 10 (2002). Since then *Kenyabirdsnet* (kenyabirdsnet@yahoogroups.com) has provided a valuable new outlet for communicating observations on-line. Most of these remain unchecked although they are now increasingly accompanied by supporting digital images. For all three countries record summaries have appeared since 2003 under Recent Reports in each issue of the *Bulletin of the African Bird Club*.

The East African Rare Birds Committee (EARC) was set up in 1985 to assist the OS-C in assessing critical records for the three countries, and this currently scrutinizes and reports on birds known from less than five records in the country concerned. However, further records of scarce birds, reports indicating range extension or status change, and observations remarkable for example for the numbers or dates involved, remain essentially unchecked, and have become scattered through a variety of outlets, many of these difficult to trace. There is clearly a need for regular reviews to bring checked records together, and we intend to include such again in *Scopus*. The first of these covers Kenya and extends back over the past four years. In future issues we hope to deal with recent records in Tanzania and Uganda, and then produce updated, perhaps annual, reports for all three countries.

We have attempted to check the veracity of records as far as possible, examining photographs in many cases, and we have omitted some reports where details were unavailable or unconvincing. We were greatly assisted in this by Brian Finch, and received helpful views from Fleur Ng'weno, Simon Thomsett, Don Turner and Nigel Hunter.

The following list deals with records from 2011-2014. Those from 2015 will be covered in a future report. For ease of reference we have listed Palearctic species separately from Afrotropical and Oceanic species. Nomenclature and order follows the *Checklist of the Birds of Kenya* (2009). The abbreviations NP and NR refer to National Park and National Reserve respectively. Atlas Square refers to the quarter square degree (QSD) square in Lewis & Pomeroy (1989).

Species with five or fewer Kenya records are designated A, those with more than five but less than about 20 records as X. Other designations indicating reason for record inclusion:

L: unusual Locality; extension of range

N: Numerical interest

D: unusual Date

B: Breeding interest

Afrotropical and Oceanic species**Somali Ostrich *Struthio molybdophanes***

L: Noted northwest edge of Dodori NR Nov 2013 and Apr 2014. At least one male and one female seen in mid Apr (FN, TM, JM).

Coqui Francolin *Francolinus coqui*

L: 1 Nairobi NP 18 Aug 2011 (BF) was the first record for the Nairobi area.

Red-winged Francolin *Francolinus levaillantii* X

2 Mara GR 25 Dec 2012 (SH) and 2 pairs there 29 Oct 2013 (NB).

There are very few recent records.

White-backed Duck *Thalassornis leuconotus*

N: c. 40 Manguo Pond, Limuru 7 Apr 2013, and c. 80 there 12 Oct 2013 (BF).

Hottentot Teal *Anas hottentotta*

N: c. 400 L. Nakuru 13 Jan 2013 (BF), a remarkably high count.

Southern Pochard *Netta erythrophthalma*

N: 2000+ Lake Naivasha July 2012 was exceptional (DT).

Maccoa Duck *Oxyura maccoa*

A male with a large all-dark immature Manguo Ponds 27 June 2012 (FN).

3 Manguo Pond, Limuru 7 Apr 2013, and 2 there 12 Oct 2014 (BF).

Has become very scarce during this century.

Albatross *Thalassarche* sp.

1 Pemba Channel 4 Oct 2012 (P&MH).

Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

N: c. 5000 Lake Nakuru 10 Jan 2013 (BF, NH), a notable count.

African Open-billed Stork *Anastomus lamelligerus*

N: 1500+ Tana River Delta 9 Feb 2013 (CJ).

Saddle-billed Stork *Ephippiorhynchus senegalensis*

L: Individuals in riverside pools Dodori NR and adjacent Aweer Community Conservancy late Oct–early Nov 2013 and early Apr 2014 (FN, TM, JM). The first documented records between the Lower Tana and the Juba.

Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus*

B: 2 chicks Nairobi NP 6 June 2013 (KP, HE) (race *paysii*).

White-backed Night Heron *Gorsachius leuconotus* X

1 Nairobi NP throughout July 2013 (BF, KP, RW, FN).

Madagascar Pond Heron *Ardeola idae*

L: 1 Busia 22 July 2011 (BF); 1 Lake Kwenia June 2013 (BF, RW).

Unusual in the west and in the southern rift.

Greater Frigatebird *Fregata minor* X

An adult female Watamu 25 Oct 2012 (MMw).

Lesser Frigatebird *Fregata ariel* X

An exhausted sub-adult female beached at Diani 24 Mar 2011 (per CJ).

Frigatebird *Fregata* sp.

1 Pemba Channel 26 Nov 2012 was the first noted there for several years (P&MH).

N: 25 high above Watamu beach Dec 13 2011 and 8 low over the beach 20 Oct 2014 (JG).

Masked Booby *Sula dactylatra*

1 picked up exhausted Watamu 13 May 2012 (CJ).

Rarely recorded close inshore

Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*

N: c. 25,000 Lake Nakuru 10 Dec 2012 (BF *et al.*) was a remarkable concentration.

L: Several Dadori NR and adjacent Aweer Conservancy early Apr 2014 (FN, JM).

There seem to be no previous records between the Lower Tana and the Juba.

Grey Kestrel *Falco ardosiacus*

L: Pair with nest and young Chebloch Gorge, Kerio Valley 1 Mar 2012 (JB).

African Cuckoo Hawk *Aviceda cuculoides*

L D: 1 Ngulia Lodge 30 Nov 2011 (DP, IK, CJ *et al.*). A new record for the site, and an interesting date.

African Swallow-tailed Kite *Chelictinia riocourii*

L: 2 Meru NP 26 Feb 2013 (DO). Unusual this far south.

Egyptian Vulture *Neophron percnopterus*

5 Tsavo East NP 20 Feb 2013 (VS); 2 Lake Kwenia 26 May 2013 (BF, RW).

1 Lobur Mission, Elemi triangle, 14 Aug 2014 (FN, SO). This formerly widespread species as become very scarce over the past 15 years.

Beaudouin's Snake Eagle *Circaetus beaudouini* A

1 Nambale 27 Mar 2012 (2nd record for Kenya), and an adult plus dependent young here 22 Apr 2014 (first Kenya breeding record) (both BF).

1 Bunyala rice scheme 10 Apr 2013, and an immature photographed here 20 Mar 2014 (MO). All accepted by the EARC.

Southern Banded Snake Eagle *Circaetus fasciolatus*

L: Several pairs calling and displaying Dadori NR and Aweer Conservancy late Oct–early Nov 2013 and early Apr 2014 (FN, TM, JM, DG).

Western Banded Snake Eagle *Circaetus cinerascens*

L: 1 Ruma NP 22 Feb 2012 (JB); 1 Imenti Forest, Meru 10 Nov 2013 (BF).

African Marsh Harrier *Circus ranivorus*

1 Iten 18 Apr 2012 (BF); 1 Serena oxbows, Mara GR 23 Apr 2012 (BF).

This species has become very scarce in Kenya

Ovambo Sparrowhawk *Accipiter ovampensis*

A pair Sabaringo valley, Mara GR 26 June 2011 (BF); an immature Melepo, Kajiado 5 July 2011 (FR); 1 Bateleur Camp, Mara GR 7 Feb 2012 (BF); 1 Gwasssi Hills, South Nyanza Nov 2014 (JB *et al.*).

Great Sparrowhawk *Accipiter melanoleucos*

L: 1 Aweer Conservancy, near Dadori NR early Nov 2013 (FN, TM).

Grasshopper Buzzard *Butastur rufipennis*

L, D: 1 Ngong Hills 15 Sep 13 (BF, AK).

An unusual site and an unusually early date

Ayres's Hawk Eagle *Aquila ayresii*

L: Individuals seen Dadori NR and Aweer Conservancy late Oct–early Nov 2013 and

early Apr 2014 (FN, TM, JM). There are almost no previous records north of the Tana River.

Cassin's Hawk Eagle *Spizaetus africanus* A

A juvenile photographed Imenti forest, Meru 28 Feb 13 (DO, PW, SK, BM).

Accepted by the EARC as the 3rd record for Kenya. An adult was seen and photographed here in 2006.

Crowned Eagle *Stephanoetus occipitalis*

B: A recently fledged juvenile Gwass Hills, South Nyanza Jan 2011 (JB).

Denham's Bustard *Neotis denhami*

1 Solio plains, Laikipia 14 Nov 2011 (BF).

Local and uncommon with few recent records.

Heuglin's Bustard *Neotis heuglinii*

L: 1 Shaba GR 20 July 2012 (BF); 1 Aruba Dam, Tsavo East NP 5 Apr 2011 (BF). A rare bird this far south.

Hartlaub's Bustard *Lissotis hartlaubii*

L: 4 Sosian Ranch, Laikipia 22 Aug 11 (BF, NH).

Hitherto unrecorded in Laikipia but subsequently found to be widespread and commoner than Black-bellied Bustard *Lissotis melanogaster* (BF).

White-spotted Flufftail *Sarothrura pulchra*

L: 1 calling Kericho tea estate 12 Feb 12 (JB).

A new locality for the species.

Buff-spotted Flufftail *Sarothrura elegans*

L: 1 calling at dusk Kalanga Spring, Ngulia 27 Nov 2011 (CJ *et al.*).

Also heard calling here in early Dec 2008.

African Crake *Crex egregia*

1 Nairobi NP 14 Nov 2011 (BF, RW).

An uncommon intra-African migrant

Striped Crake *Aenigmatolimnas marginalis*

1 Naivasha 24 June 2013 (DT).

A scarce intra-African migrant.

Grey Crowned Crane *Balearica regulorum*

N: c. 40 Nairobi NP 20 Oct 2012 (BF, FN, KP, MD).

c. 200 Brookside Dairies, Ruiru 29 Jan 2014 (FN).

Black Crowned Crane *Balearica pavonina*

40+ along road north of Todenyang 15 Aug 2014 (FN).

Extends south to the northern shores of Lake Turkana, but reports from this remote area are infrequent.

Long-toed Plover *Vanellus crassirostris*

A bird of the race *leucopterus* appeared Nairobi NP Nov–Dec 2014 (BF, NH), and has remained there since.

Bronze-winged Courser *Rhinoptilus chalcopterus*

L: 1 Silole, south of Nairobi NP 25 June 2013 (WK).

Infrequently recorded, mainly an intra-African migrant.

Madagascar Pratincole *Glareola ocularis*

N: c. 2000 Moa, Tana River Delta 10 Apr 2011 (OH).

L: 2 Olbainita swamp, Kampi ya Moto 28 August 2011 (BF, NH); 20+ Bunyala rice scheme 17 Aug 2013 (MO); 1 Nairobi racecourse 22 Jun 2013 (NH).

Inland records have been rare.

Grey-headed Gull *Chroicocephalus cirrocephalus*

L: 1 Nairobi NP 11 Feb 2014 (BF, MD) was the first record for the park.

Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybrida*

N: 1000+ Lake Nakuru 10 Dec 2012 (BF).

Brown Noddy *Anous stolidus*

N: 3000+ off Whale Is., Watamu 4 Dec 2011 (CJ).

Lesser Noddy *Anous tenuirostris* X

c. 10 Kisite 2 Feb 2012 (JBa), and 1 there 6 Dec 2013 (WWac).

Rarely recorded, but probably overlooked.

Bare-faced Go-away-bird *Corythaixoides personatus*

L: 1 Oserian, Naivasha West 14 Oct 2013 (NC).

Madagascar Lesser Cuckoo *Cuculus rochii*

1 photographed Naivasha 6 Oct 2013 (BF).

Thick-billed Cuckoo *Pachyoccyx audeberti*

L: 1 calling and displaying Nakuru NP 25–26 Nov 2011 recorded on video (SE, BF), apparently the first Kenya record away from coastal areas.

L: 1 calling in wooded palm grasslands between Basuba and Kiangwe villages, north of Dodori NR 12 Apr 2014; a bird was seen and photographed later that morning (DN, JM).

The first record north of the Lower Tana.

Yellowbill *Ceuthmochares aureus*

L: 1 Nairobi 28 Aug 2011 (ME).

An intra-African migrant from the south, rare away from coastal areas.

Freckled Nightjar *Caprimulgus tristigma*

B, L: A female on eggs Sosian, Laikipia 21 Aug 2011 (BF, AV).

Gabon Nightjar *Caprimulgus fossii*

L: A female photographed on nest Manda Is. 22 May 2011 (BF, FN, KP, MD, JK, JMw).

Pennant-winged Nightjar *Macrodipteryx vexillarius*

1 Sosian Laikipia 20 Aug 2011 (AV).

Scarce Swift *Schoutedenapus myoptilus*

L: 2+ Gwass Hills, South Nyanza 21 Feb 2012 (JBr).

Böhm's Spinetail *Neafrapus boehmi*

L: Sightings of 2–3 birds Dodori NR early Apr 2014 (FN, JM, DN).

Mottled Spinetail *Telecanthura ussheri*

L: 2 over river pool Dodori NR early Apr 2014 (FN, JM, DN).

African Black Swift *Apus barbatus*

L: A pair nesting Ngulia Lodge Nov–Dec 2013 (CJ, DP *et al.*), a new breeding locality.

Woodland Kingfisher *Halcyon senegalensis***L:** 1 Lake Nakuru 10 Mar 2013 (BF).

Rare in the Rift Valley away from Lake Baringo.

Racquet-tailed Roller *Coracias spatulatus* X**L:** 1 Mara GR 14 Aug 2011 (photos and video supplied by IS).

Accepted by the EARC as the first Kenya record of this vagrant from the south.

Hoopoe *Upupa epops***Singles** of the north tropical race *weibeli* Nairobi NP 10 Jun 13 and 25 Aug 2013 (BF *et al.*).ern**Abyssinian Ground Hornbill *Bucorvus abyssinicus*****L:** 2 Alupe 25 Mar 2012 (BF, NH, FN, KP).**Hemprich's Hornbill *Tockus hemprichi*****L:** 1 Nakuru 28 Aug 2011 (BF, NH).**Trumpeter Hornbill *Bycanistes bucinator*****L:** Small parties in riverine forest Anweer Conservancy, adjacent to Doodi NR Oct–Nov 2013 and Apr 2014 (FN, TM, JM, DN). There are no previous coastal records north of the Lower Tana.**Yellow-rumped Tinkerbird *Pogoniulus bilineatus*****L:** Recorded as common (race *fischeri*) in Witu Forest 21 May 2011 (BF, FN, KP, MD, JMw, JK).**Yellow-billed Barbet *Trachylaemus purpuratus*****L:** 1 Gwassu Hills, South Nyanza 20 Apr 2012 (JBr *et al.*); 1 Eburru Forest 12 Mar 2012 (NC).**Golden-tailed Woodpecker *Campethera abingoni*****L:** Established during 2014 as regular at Nairobi at both the Karen Blixen Museum and the Ngong Road Racecourse (FN, *et al.*).**African Pitta *Pitta angolensis*****D:** 1 Arabuko-Sokoke Forest 7 Apr 2014 (JBa).

The first record for many years, and an early date.

Gorgeous Bush Shrike *Chlorophoneus viridis*

Heard calling southern edge of Boni NR early Nov 2013 and early Apr 2014. Two were caught and photographed (FN, TM, JM, DN).

Forest Batis *Batis mixta***L:** Found at several locations along southern edge of Boni NR and in adjacent Anweer Conservancy Oct–Nov 2013 and Apr 2014. Trapped and photographed (FN, TM, JM, DN). Not previously recorded north of Arabuko-Sokoke Forest.**Pringle's Puffback *Dryoscopus pringlii*****L:** A pair Karisia, W Laikipia 26 Oct 2011 (JC).**Friedmann's Lark *Mirafra pulpa* X****L:** 1 displaying Tsavo West NP 25 May 2013 (BF); 3 singing Maungu 1 Jan 2013 (ES); adults feeding pulli in a nest at Shaba GR mid Apr 2014 (CK).**Collared Lark *Mirafra collaris* X**

A singing bird c. 15 km north of Garissa, and a further five found on the circuit Garissa

–Mado Gashi – 50 km east of Habaswein 16 Oct 2011 (BF *et al.*). The first reliable Kenya reports since a bird was noted north of Garissa in November 1974.

Tiny Greenbul *Phyllastrephus debilis*

L: Heard and seen in southern edge of Boni NR early Nov 2013, and again early Apr 2014 when 2 were also trapped and photographed near Busaba in the Aweer Conservancy (FN, TM, JM, DN). Apart from one historic record from the Lower Tana these are the first records north of Arabuko-Sokoke.

Whistling Cisticola *Cisticola lateralis*

Groups seen and recorded Kavirondo Escarpment (Atlas Square 60A) Jan–Feb 2012 in open woodland and ravine thicket (JB, DB).

Karamoja Apalis *Apalis karamojae*

A pair feeding juveniles Masai Mara 29 Jan 2011 (AK).
The first Kenya breeding record.

Olive-green Camaroptera *Camaroptera chloronota*

1 Gwasssi Hills, South Nyanza 21 Feb 2012 (JB *et al.*)
A new locality in W Kenya.

Green-capped Eremomela *Sylvietta scotops*

L: A pair watched and photographed at 1400 m on the Nyarondo Escarpment (Atlas Square 60A) Feb 2012 (JB, DB).

Yellow-bellied Hyliota *Hyliota flavigaster*

A pair seen and photographed in open woodland at 1400 m on the Nyarondo Escarpment (Atlas Square 60A) 20 Jan 2011 (JB).

Red-tailed Bristlebill *Bleda syndactyla*

L: Observed Nyarondo Escarpment (Atlas Square 60A) 20 Jan 2011 (JB)
A new locality in W Kenya.

Sharpe's Starling *Pholia sharpii*

L: 1 Nairobi NP 31 Oct 2011 (BF). A new species for the park.

Heuglin's Wheatear *Oenanthe heuglini*

L: 1 photographed at Buffalo Springs 7 Nov 2013 (BF).
There are few Kenya records away from northwest border areas.

Gambaga Flycatcher *Muscicapa gambagae*

An adult trapped and ringed Ngulia Lodge 20 Nov 2012 (CJ, MW *et al.*).
The few others trapped at Ngulia have all been juveniles.

Chapin's Flycatcher *Muscicapa chapini*

L: 5 birds including an immature South Nandi Forest 19–20 July 2011 (BF, FN, KP, MD).

Green-headed Sunbird *Cyanomitra verticalis*

L: 1 Nairobi NP 19 Dec 2012 (NH, BF). A new species for the park.

Violet-breasted Sunbird *Cinnyris chalcomelas*

N: Hundreds at Sabaki mouth 4–10 Apr 2012 (BF)

Northern Masked Weaver *Ploceus taeniopterus*

Large flocks Omo mouth Jan 2012 (KA).

Clarke's Weaver *Ploceus golangi*

A colony of 400–500 nests active late March–early April 2013 in a small wetland in the northern part of the Dakatcha Woodlands, northwest of Malindi (FN, DWCG). The first breeding record of this species. See also *Scopus* 35.

Broad-tailed Paradise Whydah *Vidua obtusa* X

1 Sabuk, Laikipia 10 Sep 2011 (AK).

Yellow-bellied Waxbill *Coccygia quartinia*

L: 1 Gwasssi Hills, South Nyanza 21 Dec 2012 (JB).

Black-faced Waxbill *Estrilda erythronotus*

L: A pair Adungosi, Busia 22 Apr 2012 (BF).

Bush Pipit *Anthus caffer*

L: 1 Shaitani lava flow, Tsavo West NP 19 Nov 2011 (BF).

Orange-winged Pytilia *Pytilia afra* X

A pair Thika 8 April 2012 and 1 at same site 19 Jan 2013 (BF, NH).

Rarely recorded in Kenya since 1960.

Western Citril *Crithagra frontalis* A

Recorded and photographed Gwasssi Hills, South Nyanza, where noted in forest edge and cultivated land Jan 2011, Feb 2012 and Nov 2014 (JB, TI, DB).

These were accepted by the EARC as the first documented records for Kenya.

Brown-rumped Bunting *Emberiza affinis* A

1 Kongelai Escarpment 21 Mar 2012 (NH, MS).

Accepted by the EARC as the 3rd record for Kenya.

Palearctic species**Gadwall *Anas strepera* X**

1 Marula Farm, Naivasha 30 Nov 2012 (KN); 1 Manguo ponds, Limuru also 30 Nov 2012 (BF, NH). Coincidentally seen on the same date.

A rare migrant with fewer than five recent records.

Eurasian Teal *Anas crecca*

L: 2 Lake Nakuru 10 Dec 2012 (BF).

Occasional on some of the Rift Valley lakes but rare at this site.

Ferruginous Duck *Aythya nyroca* X

1 Kisumu Ponds 23 Dec 2011 (PL); 1 Manguo ponds, Limuru throughout most of Dec 2013 (AK *et al.*). The first records since 2003.

Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula*

2 Dandora sewage ponds 24 Jan 2013 (PU).

The first record for several years.

Black Stork *Ciconia nigra*

D: 1 Nairobi NP 29 July 2013 and a sub-adult there 26 May 2014, both unusual dates (BF, FN, KP, MD).

Amur Falcon *Falco amurensis*

N: c. 10,000 Onkolde, Tana River Delta 8 Apr 2011 (OH). 3500 flying east Shimba Hills, 5 Apr 2012 (JM). Scores moving through wooded palm grasslands near Dodori NR, early Apr 2014 with a flock of 100+ on 8th (FN, JM). Not previously recorded in such numbers during spring passage.

In autumn, 1000+ near Kamboyo, Tsavo West NP 25 Nov 2011 (DM, MC), 560 moving south past Ngulia Lodge next day, then 26,000 passing west along Ngulia ridge 27 Nov 2011 (CJ, DP, BA *et al.*); 500+ Nairobi, 30 Nov 2011 (SB). These numbers in 2011 were exceptional. 1500+ roosting Ngulia valley 1 Dec 2014.

L: 1 Sioport 26 Feb 2012 (JB); 17 Sangailu, NE Kenya 1 Apr 2014 and 57 between Ijara and Saigalu next day (MO); 5 Bura irrigation scheme, W Kenya 17–19 Dec 2014 (MO).

Sooty Falcon *Falco concolor*

D: 1 Nairobi NP 21 May 12 (BF *et al.*) – a late date.

Barbary Falcon *Falco pelegrinoides* X

1 Ngulia Lodge 18 Nov 2011 (CJ); 2 photographed there 25–27 Nov 2014 (AS, DP, IK *et al.*).

European Honey Buzzard *Pernis apivorus*

10 Kakamega 12 Oct 2011 (TI); 1 Thika 18 Mar 2013 (DO); 2 Ngulia 28 Nov 2013 (IK, DP, JH *et al.*) and 1 there 22–23 Nov 2014 (IK, AS, DP *et al.*). 1 Amboseli 31 Mar 2014 and 2 Tsavo West NP 1 Apr 2014 (MV, SK, PW). 1n South Nyanza, singles Gembe Hills Feb 2012 and Gwasssi Hills Nov 2014 (JB *et al.*).

Undoubtedly much under-recorded; all records received are included here.

Levant Sparrowhawk *Accipiter brevipes* X

12 over rice fields between Kakamega and Kisumu 14 Nov 2011 (SB, Zoothera Birding); a juvenile Ngulia Lodge 14–15 Nov 2011 was trapped and ringed (BA, MW, NRG), and an adult male seen there 15 Nov 2011 (CJ); 1 Ngulia 15 Nov 2013 (DP, IK *et al.*).

Over 600 birds together Mara GR 23 Feb 2014 (MMo). This extraordinary gathering, with birds perched on bushes then taking off and soaring away northwards in ‘stacks’, was perhaps moving off from a migratory roost. Such a number is unprecedented anywhere in sub-Saharan Africa (see the Short Communication in this issue for more detail).

Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*

At Ngulia Lodge 1–2 on several dates 20–30 Nov 2011 (photographed), and singles 23 Nov 2012, 7 Dec 2013 and 27 Nov 2014 (CJ, DP, IK *et al.*); 1 Kongelai 21 Mar 2012 (BF). There are still few Kenya records away from Ngulia.

Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo*

N: c. 800 Kakamega 12 Oct 2011 (TI); c. 500 Ewaso Nyiro, Narok 14 Oct 2011.

Long-legged Buzzard *Buteo rufinus*

1 Nairobi NP 14 May 2012 (BF, NH), 1 there 2 Feb 2013 (BF), 2 on 22 Apr and 5 May 2013 (BF, NH, KP, MD), a juvenile 20 Jan 2014 (BF, NH) and an adult 17 Feb 2014 (BF, FN, KP, MD). Photographs were received.

Greater Spotted Eagle *Aquila clanga*

At Ngulia 1 photographed 15–16 Nov 2012 (CJ, DP *et al.*) and at least 1 passed south 26 Nov 2013 (IK, DP, JH *et al.*). 1 Nakuru 2010 Dec 12 (BF); an immature Nairobi NP 2 Dec 2013 (BF) and a juvenile there during Jan 2014 (both photographed, BF); a juv. photographed Naivasha 30 Nov 2014 (BF *et al.*).

Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva*

187 counted Tana River Delta 30 Jan 2012, 252 on 9 Feb 2013, c. 150 on 10 Jan 2014 (FN *et al.*) and c. 40 on 20 Mar 2014 (CJ *et al.*); c. 250 flew south over Watamu 25 Sep 2013 (CJ).

With near annual records over seven years, the Tana River Delta appears to be an important wintering site.

Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus*

Many noted Turkwell Delta Jan 2012 (KA).

This is a known wintering area but seldom visited.

Lesser Sand Plover *Charadrius mongolus*

L: Inland records: 1 Lake Nakuru 6 Nov 2011; 1 Dunga point, Kisumu 26 Mar 2012 (BF); 1 Nairobi NP 20 Sep 2014 (FN), the first record for the park.

Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago*

D: 1 Nairobi NP 10 June 2014 (BF), a highly unusual date.

Common Redshank *Tringa totanus*

D: 1 Lake Nakuru 2 June 2013 (SH) was an oversummering bird at an unusual locality.

Terek Sandpiper *Xenus cinereus*

L: inland: 1 Lake Magadi 17 Feb 2013 (JK).

Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*

L: inland: 1 Lake Nakuru 10 Dec 2013 (BF, NH).

Pectoral Sandpiper *Calidris melanotos* A

1 Sabaki bridge 21 July 2011 (EH).

Accepted by the EARC as the 3rd Kenya record .

Temminck's Stint *Calidris temminckii*

D: 1 Lake Nakuru 16 May 2012 (BF) was a late date for this species.

Sanderling *Calidris alba*

L: inland: 1 Nairobi NP 30 Sep 2013 (BF, KP, MD).

Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus*

Many reported Pemba Channel 11–18 Nov 2012 (P&MH).

Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus*

L: An adult of the grey-backed race *tamyriensis* Lake Naivasha 16 May 2013 (AK). Unusual for this race to occur inland.

Slender-billed Gull *Chroicocephalus genei*

5 Lake Nakuru 6 Nov 2011 (BF, NH), 4 there 26 Nov 2012 and a 1st year bird 13 Jan 2013 (BF); 1 Amboseli NP 20 Nov 2013 (BF).

Caspian Tern *Hydroprogne caspia*

L: 1 Lake Nakuru 6 Nov 2011 (BF). Inland records are unusual.

Black Tern *Chlidonias niger* A

A bird in non-breeding plumage Lake Baringo 18 Apr 2011 (BF).

Accepted by the EARC as the 4th record for Kenya.

Arctic Skua *Stercorarius parasiticus* A

A dark immature photographed at Kisite 24 July 2013 (MMw).

The first record for Kenya since 1995, although a few other reports of dark *Skua* sp. have probably been this species.

Accepted by the EARC as the 5th record for Kenya.

Eurasian Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur* X 1 Langata 3 Dec 2012 (DR).

There are no more than about 10 records for Kenya.

Lesser Cuckoo *Cuculus poliocephalus*

1 ringed Ngulia Lodge 24 Nov 2011 (DP, NRG) and another 20 Nov 2012 (CJ, NRG) – both juvenile birds; another seen nearby at Ngulia 19 Dec 2012 (DP, PK, JV)

Eurasian Scops Owl *Otus scops*

1 photographed Kasarani, Nairobi 2 Nov 2013 (WWam).

Eurasian Swift *Apus apus*

N: 14,000 counted flying east Shimba Hills 5 Apr 2012 (JM).

Eurasian Roller *Coracias garrulus*

N: Large migratory flocks included 'a few thousands' Onkolde, Tana River Delta 8 Apr 2011 (OH); 500+ moving southeast Ngulia 30 Nov 2014 and 1500+ in rain storms next day (DP, IK, AS *et al.*).

D: 2 Nairobi NP June–July 2013 (KP, HE) were apparently oversummering; 1 there 4 Oct 2014 was an early date.

Hoopoe *Upupa epops*

A bird of the nominate race Athi River 15 Dec 2012 (BF, NH).

Palearctic birds are only occasionally recorded in Kenya.

Eurasian Wryneck *Jynx torquilla*

Records, all of single birds, Nairobi 21 Nov 2011 (BF), Kanyarkwat 22 Mar 2012 (BF), Kerio Valley 14 Nov 2013 (BF), Timau 5 Jan 2014 (NH), Mpala Ranch, Laikipia 17 Mar 2014 (TI) and Loldaiga hills 29 Nov 2014 (MR).

A late bird was photographed at Nguuni, Mombasa 20 April 2012 (DS).

Lesser Grey Shrike *Lanius minor*

D: 1 Nairobi NP 18 Oct 2014 (BF). There are few autumn records from Kenya.

Woodchat Shrike *Lanius senator*

2 (male and female) Alupe 25 Mar 2012 (BF, NH, FN, KP).

Red-rumped Swallow *Cecropis daurica daurica* A

A bird of the nominate race Ngong Hills 20 Apr 2013 (BF, NH, SBa).

Accepted by the EARC as the 2nd Kenya record of this Palearctic race.

Basra Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus griseldis*

LD: 6 individuals in wooded grasslands at Baure, northwest edge of Dodori NR 14 Apr 2014; another seen and photographed next day (EM, JM).

North of the known coastal Kenyan wintering area, and a late date.

Marsh Warbler *Acrocephalus palustris*

L: 1 examined in the hand Oloidien, Naivasha 28 Nov 2014 (DT).

There are very few records from the Rift Valley and the west.

Icterine Warbler *Hippolais icterina*

Records, all of single birds, from Ngulia Lodge (trapped and ringed) 23 Nov 2011 (DP, NRG), and Nairobi NP 24 Mar 2014 (BF) (photographed), 20 Oct 2014 (BF) and 20 Dec 2014 (NH).

Common Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita*

1 in song Turi, Molo 7 Feb 2014 (CJ)

Not infrequent in highland forest sites in W Kenya.

Wood Warbler *Phylloscopus sibilatrix*

1 trapped and ringed Ngulia Lodge 2 Dec 2013 (KT, DP, NRG).

Irania *Irania gutturalis*

L: 1 west side of Lake Naivasha early Apr 2012 (TS).

Few rift valley records.

Rufous Scrub Robin *Cercotrichas galactotes*

L: 1 Oloiden, Naivasha early Apr 2012, during extremely dry conditions (DT).

Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*

L: 1 Boni NR early Nov 2013 (TM).

Ortolan Bunting *Emberiza hortulana* X

1 Kerio Valley 4 Nov 2011 (SE); an adult male trapped Ngulia Lodge 21 Nov 2012 (CJ, MW, GB, NRG), the fourth record from this site and the second to be ringed.

There are still fewer than ten Kenya records.

Observers

BA Bernard Amakobe, KA Kieran Avery, GB Graeme Backhurst, JBa Jonathan Baya, JB James Bradley, DB David Bradley, SB Steve Bird, NB Nik Borrow, NC Nigel Carnelly, JC James Christian, MD Mike Davidson, DWCG Dakatcha Woodland Conservation Group, SE Steven Easley, HE Heather Elkins, BF Brian Finch, JG Jaap Gijssbertsen, OH Olivier Hamerlynck, EH Ed Harper, SH Stratton Hatfield, JH Jan Heckmann, P&MH Pat and Maia Hemphill, NH Nigel Hunter, TI Titus Imboma, CJ Colin Jackson, SK Shiv Kapila, CK Chege Kariuki, AK Adam Kennedy, PK Peter Kennerley, IK Ian Kerton, JK Joshua Kiwa, WK Willie Knocker, PL Patrick Lhoir, EM Edson Mlamba, MMo Mike Mockler, BM Benson Mugambi, JM John Musina, JMw Jonathon Mwachongo, MMw Martin Mwema, TM Timothy Mwinami, KN Kariuki Ndang'ang'a, DN David Ngala, NRG Ngulia Ringing Group, FN Fleur Ngweno, DP David Pearson, KP Karen Plumbe, MO Martin Odino, DO Darcy Ogada, SO Sheena Orr, DR Dave Richards, FR Fiona Ried, MR Mike Roberts, ES Edwin Selempo, AS Attila Sandor, DS Doris Schaule, TS Tony Seth-Smith, IS Itai Shanni, MS Maurice Sinyerere, KT Kasper Thorup, DT Don Turner, PU Peter Usher, JV Joost Valkenburg, AV Albie Venter, MV Munir Virani, WWac Washington Wachira, PW Peter Wairisho, WWam Wanyoike Wamiti, RW Rupert Watson, MW Malcolm Wilson.

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Future Reports

We shall continue to review noteworthy Kenya bird records. Those for 2015 and 2016 can be submitted directly to scopus@naturekenya.org and a guide to the scarcer or endangered species that concern us was given on pp. 53–56 of *Scopus* 35. We also plan a report for Uganda for 2012–2015 to update the review of Skeen in *Scopus* 33. And we hope to be able to complete a similar report for recent years for Tanzania.

Short communications

An exceptional gathering of Levant Sparrowhawks *Accipiter brevipes* in Mara North Conservancy, western Kenya

On 23 February 2014, my wife Pat and I were on an early morning game-drive from Kicheche Mara Camp in the Mara North Conservancy, with our guide Benjamin Kaluena. Approximately 2h after sunrise, on an expanse of undulating plain with scattered trees and bushes, a bird that at first suggested a Shikra *Accipiter badius* flew past our vehicle and alighted in a small tree about 100m away. It was soon followed by several more flying in the same direction and also alighting in trees and bushes. We then noticed that there were many more of them perching in trees everywhere we looked. By now, we had reassessed the initial identification and realized that these were all Levant Sparrowhawks *Accipiter brevipes* (Fig. 1).



Figure 1. Photographs confirming the identification of Levant Sparrowhawk *Accipiter brevipes*. Photos: M. Mockler.

The birds appeared restless and were becoming more mobile, constantly flying from tree to tree, all moving in a roughly northerly or north-easterly direction. This constant movement made them difficult to photograph, but a number of shots were obtained of birds perched and in flight. Soon some of the birds tried to gain height, but they appeared to be struggling to find sufficient uplift. There were perhaps 80–100 in this first group, but this was only part of the picture, for within minutes, we noticed more and more birds rising up from beyond a low hill. Birds in the first group were now rising in a thermal while others were searching for thermals elsewhere. Before long, there were four distinct ‘stacks’ or ‘columns’ of birds, all rising slowly as they circled, at the same time drifting away to the north or north-east. These new stacks contained well over 100 birds each. Counting them was not easy as they were swirling around and beginning to coalesce as they drifted further and further away. Photographs were taken of part of one of these stacks but it was impossible to include the majority of birds in one image (Fig. 2).



Figure 2. Partial stack of 100+ Levant Sparrowhawks over the Mara North Conservancy, 23 February 2014. Photo: M. Mockler.

We eventually assumed that the action was over, but some 10 min later more birds appeared from over a ridge, rising as they flew past us and drifting away in the direction the others had gone. Incredible as it seemed, we estimated we had seen a minimum of 600 birds – and this was probably a conservative estimate.

Mike Mockler

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Editorial note: Until recently there had been no more than about 20 records of Levant Sparrowhawk in East Africa, nearly all from Kenya, and most of these of single birds. Then in January 2009 a gathering of at least 7–12 birds was seen in south-west Tanzania (N.E. Baker *in litt.*) and this has been followed by sightings of further groups in western Kenya, 23 birds together in January 2010 (D.J. Fisher *in litt.*) and 12 in February 2012 (S. Bird). The species' status and wintering in Sudan and Ethiopia is still little understood. This Mara sighting is thus all the more remarkable.

Scopus 36(1): 33–34, January 2016

Received 26 October 2015

Recent undocumented Kenya records of the Grey-chested Babbler *Kakamega poliothorax*

Our attention has been drawn to the status of the Grey-chested Babbler *Kakamega poliothorax* by the *Checklist of the Birds of Kenya* (EANHS 2009), which states that there are no documented records of the species in Kenya since 1979. Though Kenya is at the extreme eastern edge of the species' global range, pre-1979 records recognized the species in Kakamega Forest and North Nandi and South Nandi Forests, and formerly also at Mt Elgon and Lerundo (Britton 1980; Zimmerman *et al.* 1999; Fry *et al.* 2000).

Our perusal of old ringing books available at the Ornithology section of the National Museums of Kenya has shown that the species still exists in some of its known range and may be more common than the checklist suggests. We have collated the available data from museum specimens, ringing books and unpublished reports of expeditions to Kakamega, South Nandi and North Nandi Forests. Various biodiversity survey expeditions with varying objectives have been conducted in these forests since 1979.

During a mist netting survey in Kakamega for the Kenya Indigenous Forest Conservation Programme (KIFCON) project between 11 April 1993 and 22 May 1993, five individuals of *Kakamega poliothorax* were caught in the Buyangu area. All of these were ringed by L. Bennun, who aged them as adults, and two were re-trapped at the same net site a few days later. A previous survey by Waiyaki and Bennun (1992) had failed to catch the species at any of the sites they mist-netted within Kakamega Forest, including the Buyangu area, but they acknowledged that this visit was short. Mann (1980) notes that *K. poliothorax* is very local and faithful to its territory and thus nets placed in the wrong place, even during a long survey, would fail to capture the species. T. Imboma (Ornithology Section, National Museums of Kenya) who regularly rings birds for monitoring around the Ikuywa river area of Kakamega Forest, caught another four in 2005 and two more in January 2014. The most recent records are those of H. Oelke (University of Göttingen, Germany) in Kakamega in February 2015. Two were caught in the Ikuywa river area, one of which was a retrap of a bird ringed by T. Imboma in 2014 at the same site. In all we have retrieved details of 13 ringing captures in Kakamega Forest since 1979, and these are listed together with biometric

data in Table 1. An additional record was submitted to the Kenya Bird Map database (kenyabirdmap.adu.org.za) in January 2015 for pentad (0015c3450) which covers the southern part of Kakamega Forest including the Ikuywa River area.

The most recent Museum specimens of *K. poliothorax* were collected in 1979 in the North Nandi Forest, but there have been no records from either North Nandi or South Nandi since. A short expedition by Waiyaki (1998) to South Nandi did not record it, and several more recent surveys of these two forests failed to find it. But the species is undoubtedly likely to be recorded in both North Nandi and South Nandi if more comprehensive surveys are conducted. In view of its high site fidelity, it would be worth attempting to map territories, as well as establishing the current population within the three forests.

Table 1. Ringing records of *Kakamega poliothorax* in Kenya since 1979. Ring numbers in bold indicate retrapped individuals. Buyangu, Ikuywa and Isecheno are all within Kakamega Forest. All measurements are in mm.

Ring number	Date	Site	Age	Ringer	Wing	Tarsus	Tail	Head to bill
A58278	5 May 1993	Buyangu	Adult	L. Bennun	87	34.4	79	
A58278	6 May 1993	Buyangu		L. Bennun				
X80786	7 May 1993	Buyangu	Adult	L. Bennun	76	29.0	73	32.9
A58292	7 May 1993	Buyangu	Adult	L. Bennun	86	35.5	80	36.7
A59292	8 May 1993	Buyangu		L. Bennun				
AA12514	25 May 2005	Ikuywa	Adult	T. Imboma	80	35.2		38.4
AA12519	25 May 2005	Ikuywa	Sub-ad	T. Imboma	77	34.5		38.4
AA12702	23 Sep 2005	Isecheno	Adult	T. Imboma	85	39.7		34.5
AA12939	30 Sep 2005	Ikuywa	Adult	T. Imboma	80	34.7		33.6
AA30707	8 Jan 2014		Adult	T. Imboma	89	40.1		34.7
AA30708	8 Jan 2014		Adult	T. Imboma	87	38.6		34.8
AA33399	23 Feb 2015		Adult	H. Oelke	85			32.8
AA30708	23 Feb 2015		Adult	H. Oelke				

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Scopus 36(1): 34–36, January 2016

Received 25 May 2015

Discovery of a population of Blue-mantled Crested Flycatcher *Trochocercus cyanomelas* in the Mara ecosystem

Blue-mantled (African) Crested Flycatcher *Trochocercus cyanomelas* is a fairly widespread species throughout sub-Saharan Africa, particularly in the eastern half of the continent. In East Africa, it is represented by two subspecies: *T. c. vivax* in western Tanzania, Burundi, Rwanda, and southern Uganda, and *T. c. bivittatus* in central Kenya and along the Indian Ocean coast from southern Somalia to southern Tanzania. A couple of recent sightings of this species in western Kenya suggest there is an overlooked population near the Mara ecosystem on the Oloololo Escarpment.

The first observation was by TD and DB on 13 February 2015 in a patch of fragmented forest atop the Oloololo Escarpment, about 1 km south of Angama Lodge (formerly Ol Kurrak) at 1°16'S, 34°58'E. While some of this forest mosaic can be dense, this particular fragment was characterized by a fairly open understory as a result of frequent cattle usage, with a dense canopy about 2–3 m high. It was at this height that a pair of birds was detected, first by voice, then confirmed by sight as they moved quickly through.

The voice consisted of nasal and somewhat abrasive squeaks and slurs similar to the calls of African Paradise Flycatcher *Terpsiphone viridis*. But this was followed by a beautiful strident series of quickly repeated notes ('du-du-du-du-du-du'). This happened a few times, and matched perfectly the song of *T. cyanomelas* in the *eGuide to the Birds of East Africa* (2014), which was consulted minutes later. The sexes were quite different in appearance. TD had a brief but clear view of the head of the female as she perched amongst leaves close overhead. This was uniformly grey with a noticeably pointed, rather shaggy crest, and a hint of an eye-ring. DB had views of the pair as they moved through a small thicket about 2 m above ground. The male showed a black head and throat contrasting with white underparts, a pointed crest, dark upperparts with a long narrow white bar across the wing, and a dark tail. The tail was not fanned and showed no prominent white feather tips.

White-tailed Crested-Flycatcher *Elminia albonotatus* might be considered more likely in these forests but was ruled out. This species does not appear to have a strident song of any kind and the sexes are similar. It lacks the well demarcated white underparts and white wing-bar, and continually fans its tail to show white feather tips. Thus, we are confident that our observation was of *T. cyanomelas*. The subspecies *vivax* known from southern Uganda shows much less white on the wing than the

central Kenya race *bivittatus* (del Hoyo *et al.* 2006), and would conform better with our views of the Oloololo bird.

The second sighting of a pair of *T. cyanomelas* was by AP on 23 May 2015, in Nyakweri Forest, a much larger and denser tract of forest some 7 km northwest of the first sighting. Again, the birds were first detected by voice as they moved quickly through the canopy, and identification was then eventually confirmed by sight.

Given the distance between these two observations, and the amount of suitable habitat in the area, it is most improbable that they involved the same pair of vagrant birds, or two distinct vagrant pairs. In all likelihood, they represent a previously overlooked population. With more observers now interested in this area, further observations of *T. cyanomelas* should result, allowing a better understanding of the size and distribution of this population.

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Scopus 36(1): 36–37, January 2016

Received 20 April 2015

Review

100 Common Bird Calls in East Africa (book and CD)

Dave Richards and Brian Finch

March 19, 2016, Penguin Random House South Africa, ISBN 978-1775842514, pp. 64, full colour. Price US\$10.00/GB£6.70

In this review, I shall attempt to convince readers that improving your knowledge of bird sounds can make you a happier person. My review copy of this book has just been delivered and as soon as I open the parcel, a big smile spreads across my face. The cover is bright and attractive with a good selection of high quality images splashed across it. Inside, there are brief and concise introductions to bird calls and how to use the book before 100 species are illustrated and described. Anyone familiar with Dave Richards' photography will already know that his work is among the best in the region, being bright, sharp and with superb colouration. Favourite images of mine within this book include the Hartlaub's Turaco *Tauraco hartlaubi* (p. 17), Sulphur-breasted Bushshrike *Chlorophoneus sulfureopectus* (p. 34), and African Citril *Crithagra citrinelloides* (p. 61). The species descriptions are light and aimed at the novice although I cannot recall a book on East African birds that provides such good information on bird nests and, for the majority of species, eggs too and this should be commended. Also of note are the species names in Swahili as well as English, although scientific names have been sacrificed. For the target audience, I agree with this decision although, from my experience, I'll bet the majority of Swahili-speakers will know more of the featured species by their English names. The index usefully provides page numbers, and track numbers for the CD that is conveniently contained within a neat vinyl pouch on the rear inside cover.

As I slide the CD into my laptop and hit 'Play', I am introduced to the first species – Helmeted Guineafowl *Numida meleagris*. Like some smells and other sounds, bird calls have the ability to prompt memories and emotions and my mind immediately takes me back to the Masai Mara where I had countless encounters with this splendid, yet comical, species. A good feature about the bird calls on this CD is the variety of call types provided, so not only is the frequently-heard, agitated, grating call of the guineafowl given but also the repeated mournful whistle that I always associate with birds heading to roost in the evening. The quality of sound files is very good and Brian has also provided a meaningful description of the songs and calls in the species descriptions. Some are especially useful for helping the reader remember the species calling, especially the Red-eyed Dove *Streptopelia semitorquata* ('I am a Red-eyed Dove') and Ring-necked Dove *S. capicola* ('work harder'). It's good fun to come up with your own 'translations' to accompany bird calls too. As I reach track 83, I turn up the volume and watch my wife's face as I play the song of White-browed Robin Chat *Cossypha heuglini*. Vicki immediately looks up from her book, shakes her head and slams her book down as the memory arrives. "Oh no. That bird still sends shivers through me!", she laughs and I know exactly what she's talking about. While managing a safari camp in Tanzania, we were unceremoniously woken by these noisy birds at 5:30 a.m. every day. Yes, sometimes the memories that bird calls bring with them are not so nice but I'll wager that most calls will trigger some kind of response, good or bad, for most listeners. Thinking back, I have a good memory for every single bird call on this CD so I can say with certainty that bird calls make me happy.

I have struggled to find faults with this book. It is difficult to separate similar-looking species by appearance, particularly the two featured nightjars and robin chats, although this is probably not the main aim of the book. Also, the image for Nubian Woodpecker *Campethera nubica* on p. 32 actually shows a female Golden-tailed Woodpecker *C. abingoni*, as identified by the heavily streaked, not spotted, underparts.

In summary, I highly recommend this book for beginners and occasional birders and I am confident that it will not only improve your birding skills but will also bring extra happiness into your life!

Adam Scott Kennedy

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vation evaluation for birds of *Brachylaena* woodland and mixed dry forest in north-east Tanzania. *Bird Conservation International* 10: 47–65.

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Both English and scientific names of birds should be given when the species is first mentioned — in the title and in the text — thereafter, only one name should be used.

Bird names should be those of a stated work. Any deviations from this work should be noted and the reasons given. Black-and-white or colour photographs and line illustrations should be provided as separate graphic files in JPEG or TIFF format. All articles should be submitted by email in Microsoft Word or as a Rich Text Format (RTF) file.

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Rare birds in East Africa

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Ringling scheme of eastern Africa

This covers several countries in the area. Qualified and aspiring ringers should

contact the ringing organizer, Bernard Amakobe, Ornithology Section, Zoology Department, National Museums of Kenya, P.O. Box 40658, 00100, Nairobi, Kenya; tel. +254 20 3742161 ext. 243; email: scopumbre05@gmail.com

The BirdLife International Partnership in eastern Africa

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THE EAST AFRICA

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